



Planning Department  
Community Development Department, Town of Los Gatos  
110 E. Main Street  
Los Gatos, CA 95030

April 16, 2021

**Re: The Bouknight Residence, 145\* Wood Road**  
**Letter of Justification for requested development exceptions**

Dear Community Development Team.

Below please find explanations detailing the need and our effort of minimizing the scope of the exceptions requested for the project.

**III. SITE PLANNING**

**A. Grading: (refer to exception exhibit on A1.2 and landscape plans)**

- Fill exception at the northern corner of the turnaround area (driveway): fire protection standards require the entire turnaround area to be flat with a max slope of no more than 5%, after trying out different configurations and looking at possible locations on site, we believe that the proposed shape and location of the turnaround area will require the least amount of grading and disturbance to existing trees. This corner, together with its retaining walls, will be screened by the oak grove and not be visible to any neighbors.
- Cut exception for the rear yard: please refer to the landscape architect's justification letter for the updated backyard design.

**C. Driveway slope: (refer to civil sheet 5)**

- In order to allow for a smooth 5% slope transition from Wood Road, as well as to keep the entire turnaround area at a level 5% slope, we need to make up the elevation difference with the mid section of the driveway. Keeping it at 15% slope will require a longer driveway, which can encroach into the existing trees, or require an excessive amounts of cuts and fills. In contrast, proposing a 20% slope, while acceptable from the driver's experience, is a better solution to the site contour and layout.

**D. Safety, Fire Hazards: (refer to architectural site plan on A1)**

- Two (2) above ground water tanks are proposed to meet the Fire Protection requirements. Because of their bulky size our main concern is to shield them from the neighbors' view (Wood Road) and out of the front setback. That leaves the north side of the property as our only option. Next we want to locate them away from existing trees, as well as to allow adequate clearance from the main structure (FD requirement). The proposed location will be "flatter" than the rest of the hill and hopefully, require less grading. Lastly, the visibility study has shown that the water tanks will be screened by trees and not visible to the foothill.

**V. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN**

**C. Building Height: (refer to front elevation on A7)**

- Previously indicated areas extending beyond 18 ft height plane have been lowered. The only area that remains above the 18 ft height plane is a portion of the loggia roof corner. The extent of the roof is essential to the loggia and lowering it to be below the 18 ft height plane will prohibit door operation and usability of the space. Secondly, the visibility study has shown that this portion of the roof is screened by trees. With these reasons we are asking for an exception to allow the roof to remain as planned.

## VI. SITE ELEMENTS

### C. Retaining walls: (refer to landscape and civil plans)

The use of site retaining walls has been carefully thought-out at the following areas:

- The rear yard plan has been updated with a tier configuration; it avoids creating large flat areas and to keep the retaining walls to below 5ft high. Refer to landscape architect's justification letter for more details.
- Retaining walls are added along a portion of the driveway to avoid creating backfills against existing trees, as recommended by the town's arborist.
- Lastly a portion of retaining wall exceeding the 5ft high is needed at the fire truck turn-around corner in order to provide a level 5% area for the entire turnaround area.

### E. Accessory buildings: (refer to landscape plans)

- Pool has been relocated to be within the LRDA.

Sincerely,



Jessie Delucchi

**KOHLSAAT & ASSOCIATES**  
ARCHITECTURE



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Associate Planner  
Town of Los Gatos

This project was previously submitted and reviewed by staff. As a result of comments received from the staff review and other considerations the rear yard of the house has been redesigned. Revisions were made to be more responsive to the topography and to minimize grading, retaining wall heights, and the need for exceptions.

#### The original submittal

The original rear yard was created by a single retaining wall with a graded slope above it. This resulted in a flat area that, while usable, was determined by the staff to not be consistent with the HDS&G restrictions on grading to create flat area. In addition, that design as proposed would have required a major grading exception.

A new swimming pool was also proposed, with the staff review noting that part of the pool extended beyond the LRDA.

#### Revised landscape design

The proposed site for the house and yards is a sloping site off of Wood Road. The design of the house steps up the hill and has an overall low profile. Because of the placing of the house on the site, any rear yard development would have very few if any visibility issues.

There is a desire on the part of the owners to have an outdoor space behind the house that would be served by doors from the family room on the upper floor. The area behind the house slopes up to the rear property line and would need grading and retaining walls to accommodate the outdoor functions desired by the owners, while keeping as close as possible to the Town standards and guidelines.

The owners requested that the yard include a swimming pool, spa, and some space for dining or outdoor seating. And, if possible, a shade structure.

We were able to achieve the items desired by the owners while dramatically reducing the amount of grading and the magnitude of exceptions required by the original design. This was achieved by dividing the rear yard into two terraces rather than the one large space proposed in the original design.

The shape of the slope behind the house is not uniform resulting in areas that needed more cut than others, which is typical of hillsides. The design attempts to balance the desire for outdoor area with an adherence to the grading standards. The resulting proposal has some areas that will require Grading Policy exceptions. The majority of the design complies with the Grading

Policy. The overall result is modest areas behind the house that can be used for outdoor living with less grading than the original.

The upper terrace includes the pool, spa, and a small seating area. The lower terrace provides additional seating area and a small shade structure.

The use of terracing has created a design that more closely conforms with the hillside above the house. This has reduced the grading exception of the original submittal from 4 feet to less than 2 feet in all cases, and less than a foot in the majority of areas. Many of the areas of cut conform to the grading standards and will need no exceptions at all. All of the retaining walls have all been kept to a height of feet or less. In the small areas that need fill, none of them will require a grading exception.

Meeting the desire for outdoor space is always a challenge in the hillsides and rarely can all of the owners desires be met. In this case we have designed spaces that can be used by the owners with minor exceptions needed to the HDS&G. The areas behind the home will enhance the living experience of the owners, while not visually impact any of the surrounding areas, and will keep earthwork in line with the spirit of the Hillside Standards and Guidelines.

If you have any questions on this letter or the updated plans please give me a call at 408-761-0212 or by email at [david@foxla.net](mailto:david@foxla.net).

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Fox' with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Fox  
Landscape Architect  
CA lic. 1966/5053